IN THE HIGH COURT OF GUJARAT AT AHMEDABAD

SPECIAL CIVIL APPLICATION No. 4522 of 2006

For Approval and Signature:

HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE P.B.MAJMUDAR

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1 Whether Reporters of Local Papers may be allowed to see the judgment ?

2 To be referred to the Reporter or not ?

3 Whether their Lordships wish to see the fair copy of the judgment ?

4 Whether this case involves a substantial question of law as to the interpretation of the constitution of India, 1950 or any order made thereunder ?

5 Whether it is to be circulated to the civil judge ?

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MANHARSINH BHIMSINH ZALA - Petitioner(s)
Versus
STATE OF GUJARAT & 2 - Respondent(s)

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Appearance :
MS KRISHNA U MISHRA for Petitioner(s) : 1,
MR ND GOHIL AGP for Respondent(s) : 3,

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CORAM : HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE P.B.MAJMUDAR

Date : 05/07/2006

ORAL JUDGMENT

1. By filing this petition, the detenu has challenged detention order of the detenu dated 21-2-2006, by which the detenu is detained as a “bootlegger” under Gujarat Prevention of Anti Social Activities

Act, 1985 [hereinafter referred to as "the PASA Act" for convenience]. With the detention order, the detenu is also served with the grounds of detention. In the grounds of detention, there is a reference to solitasry criminal case pending against the detenu. The aforesaid cases are registered under the Bombay Prohibition Act with Prohibition Station, East Zone vide CR No.398 of 2006 on 18/2/2006. It is alleged that the detenu is dealing in foreign-made liquor.

2. Learned advocate for the detenu submitted that except the aforesaid solitary criminal case pending against the detenu, there is no other material available for coming to the conclusion that the detenu is a "bootlegger". He further submitted that no statement of any independent witness is recorded by the detaining authority for coming to the conclusion that the activities of the detenu are prejudicial to public health or that the detenu has violated public and order. It is submitted that at the most it can be said that the detenu has violated law and order and not public order. He has also submitted that at the time of passing the detention order, the detenu was in judicial custody. However, the detaining authority has not stated that on what ground, it has come to the conclusion that the detenu will continue his illegal activities, after his release on bail. In order to substantiate his say, learned advocate for the detenu has relied upon the decision of the Division Bench of this Court rendered in Letters Patent Appeal No 223 of 2000 in Special Civil Application No. 554 of 2000 in the case of Ashok Balabhai Makwana V. State of Gujarat. In paragraph 5 of the said judgement, Division Bench of this Court has held as under :

"If we examine the present case on the anvil of the test which

has been applied by the Supreme Court in the case of K.S. Zala v. State of Gujarat (supra), i.e. with regard to the presence of credible material and as to how the detaining authority has made the mention against the appellant being an obstruction to the public health and public order, we find that in the instant case so far as the statements of the witnesses which were recorded with regard to unregistered cases, that ground has been rejected by the learned Single Judge himself. It is, of course, true that after narrating the particulars of the criminal cases, the detaining authority has mentioned that the activities of the appellant were an obstacle to the public health and public order, but this bald observation cannot be taken to be decisive so as to arrive at the satisfaction that the activities of the detenu were prejudicial to the public order or public health and that tempo of public life was disturbed. No observation made in any part of the judgement can be read in isolation and bereft the context. The judgement is to be read as a whole and even the observations which have been made by the Supreme Court in para 6 of the judgement are to be considered in light of the earlier observations made in para 5 where presence of credible material before the detaining authority has been insisted upon. Thus, litmus test to find out as to whether it is a case of breach of public order or breach of public health is concerned, credible material has to be there. In the case of K.S. Zala before the Supreme Court, the detaining authority had also relied upon the statements of the witnesses so as to show that violence resorted to by the detenu in that case had disturbed the even tempo of public life and the material on record had shown that members of the public of those localities had to run away from there and to go inside their houses and to close their doors. No such fact situation has been mentioned in the present case and the ground with regard to the statements of the three witnesses has been rejected by the learned Single Judge himself and it has been held that there had been violation or infringement of the detenu's right against such statements. In this view of the matter whatsoever said by the three witnesses with regard to unregistered cases and with regard to the three incidents referred to hereinabove, it cannot be considered to be the material germane for the purpose of consideration of the threat to the public health and public order. Thus, the only material which remains is the registered criminal cases and that by itself cannot be said to be a material for the purpose of holding that the appellant's activities had become a threat to the public order and public health. Necessary material in this

regard is totally wanting in the body of the detention order itself. In large number of cases, the Supreme Court has considered that involvement in bootlegging activities even if coupled with violence does not amount to threat to public order or public health. The mere mention of allegations unless they are supported by any material cannot be said to be material germane for the purpose of arriving at the satisfaction with regard to breach of public order or public health and we find that after giving particulars of criminal cases, the detaining authority by including certain allegations, not supported by any credible material has simply observed that the appellant's activities were an obstacle to the public health and public order. In this view of the mater keeping in view the observations made by the Supreme Court in the case of K.S. Zala v. State of Gujarat (supra) itself in paras 4 and 5, we do not find that it can be held to be a case of breach of public health and public order. Learned counsel for the appellant has also argued several other points before us, but we do not find it necessary to go into those grounds. It may be mentioned that it was not a case of breach of public order or public health and it was not argued before the learned Single Judge. Even if that be so, in such matters, the point which arises on the face of the facts of the case by the body of the order itself, which does not require further investigation of the facts, can certainly be allowed to be raised and we allow learned counsel for the appellant to raise this point and find that this point is not without substance. The impugned order passed by the learned single Judge upholding the detention order therefore, cannot be said to be in consonance with the settled position of law. The detention order deserves to be quashed and set aside on this ground alone. We, therefore, do not go into other grounds which were raised on behalf of the appellants."

3. Mr.N.D.Gohil, learned AGP has submitted that it is true that except the aforesaid solitary criminal case pending against the detenu, there is no other material against the detenu. Accordingly, learned AGP is not in a position to substantiate his say that the activities of the detenu are prejudicial to public health.

4. Considering the aforesaid aspect of the matter as well as after

considering the aforesaid judgement of the Division Bench of this Court and considering the fact that there is nothing to show that the activity of the detenu is prejudicial to public health, at the most it can be said that the detenu is guilty of violating law and order but it cannot be said that the activity of the detenu is prejudicial to public health. Therefore, the impugned order of detention is required to be quashed and set aside.

5. In view of what is stated herein above, this petition is allowed. The impugned order of detention dtd.21/2/2006 is quashed and set aside. The detenu – Manharsinh Bhimsinh Zala is ordered to be released forthwith unless his presence is required in connection with any other case. Rule is made absolute with no order as to costs.

6. In order to see that the detenu is not tempted to repeat the offence, the learned advocate appearing on behalf of the detenu has made a voluntary statement that the detenu will not leave Bapunagar area of Ahmedabad till 31/10/2006. The voluntary statement is recorded. However, it is ultimately for the concerned authority to monitor the same.

(P.B.MAJMUDAR,J.)

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